

DARESAY

# THE TEAM WORK KIT

Handbook

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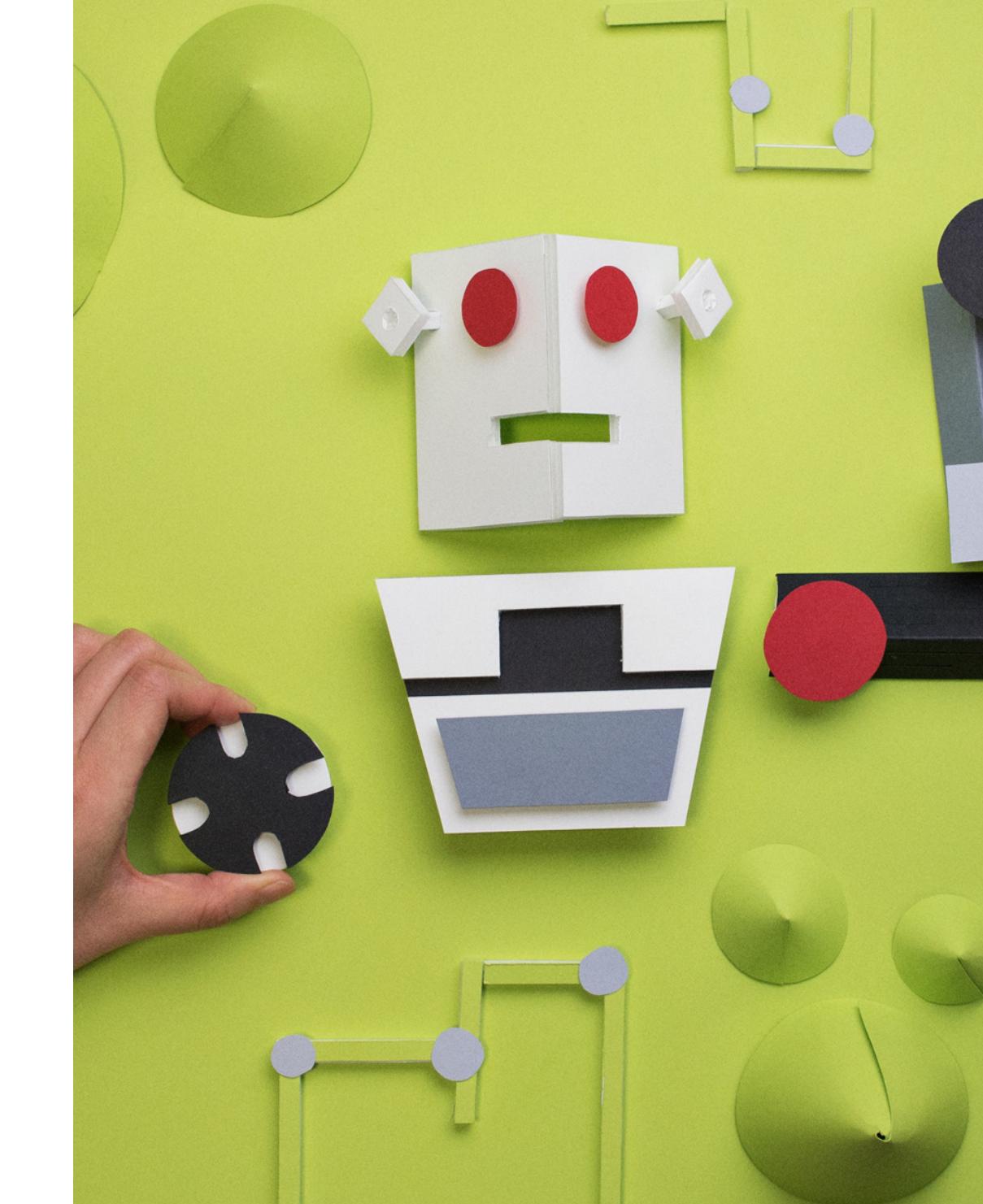
# INTRO

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We believe teams of high-performing problem solvers can be more than a happy accident. Every team wants to deliver their best work and feel a sense of pride just in the outcome and also in the experience of being creative, resilient collaborators. And every team can achieve it.

To do this, you don't need to have a team of rockstars, or the perfect mix of personality types. It's more important how you work together, and what habits and qualities the group collectively works on. The guide you're holding gives you a roadmap for navigating team dynamics through tasks and complex projects so you get solid deliverables and team growth you can really see.

The Teamwork Kit is a way of developing a structure where the variables of human behaviour, time, and cost all come together. It places individuals and interactions over processes, and allows them to respond to change. The toolkit helps cultivate a shared mindset and a safe work environment. The activities in it are focused on fostering participation, opening channels of communication, and increasing the overall quality of work, all in an environment where everyone can feel safe to take calculated risks.



# What does The Teamwork Kit lead to?

We all want to be creative, bonded, high-performing teams, but what does that actually look like? The first thing to do is to name a goal you can work toward.

The outcome of the Teamwork Kit is a group of people who, when given a task they haven't seen before, have the habits and norms to build reflection loops, cultivate safety, and solve a problem effectively, reliably.

## What a team that's focused on learning and growing does:

- Works through conflicts as part of growth
- Takes each member seriously and values their contribution
- Has clear roles and responsibilities
- Works together to be responsive, rather than reactive
- Checks in on progress toward goals regularly
- Identifies and addresses bottlenecks before they become blocks and stressors
- Makes the work environment safe for all members
- Gives and receives constructive and positive feedback



## What a team that's focused on learning and growing doesn't do:

- Only gives updates when it's absolutely required
- Micromanages one another
- Leaves conflicts, or issues unaddressed for the sake of productivity
- Has a reactive mindset, driven by whatever is happening in the moment
- Uses opportunities for feedback to give vague praise and overly personal criticism
- Blames others or each other for blocks, bottlenecks and failures
- Is overly reliant on a group leader
- Enables a 'rock star' mentality from certain members, giving them a 'pass' from responsibility or rules

# What does it take to get there?

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Change and growth take time, and this toolkit forms the red thread for teams who are ready to go on that journey. It's designed for project-oriented work in small teams, but you can adapt it for any kind of work group, or any size team.

When you apply the formula consistently and collaboratively, it becomes a way to build reflection loops, plan structured discussions about how work is being done, and grow together.

This handbook is a valuable resource for anyone on the team, but it's especially helpful for the person facilitating. It's full of practical tips that will help everyone get the most out of each session. You'll be better equipped to evaluate your dynamics and strengths, and take guided steps to improve them, in the space and time that you make for it.

# THE TEAMWORK FORMULA

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Like any relationship, whether between two people or twenty, growth requires a shared belief in the value of trust. It can help to get an outside facilitator, but that's not always possible.

We use this approach with clients, in projects, and in our internal work groups because building a foundation of safety can help any team get through the “forming, storming, norming, and performing” stages every relationship goes through. We don’t get to skip the ones we don’t like, so this is what keeps us on track.

In 2015, [Google published results of a four-year study on high-performing teams](#), as part of its Re:Work initiative. They set out to learn what the best teams had in common,

and found that the secret ingredient was a shared sense of psychological safety, not expertise or experience. This demonstrated what group development theorists, coaches, and organisational psychologists have long argued: harmony is made, not created out of thin air. But how do you actually do it? We believe you need a mindset, a good set of tools, and some time.

**Safety first,  
No matter what  
comes next**

# The formula has three parts

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## Mindset

A belief that great teams are built with practices, not luck. The best collaborations come from shared learning, showing mutual respect, and collective perseverance through conflict. It will be hard, and you will get frustrated, and that's absolutely normal.



## Toolkit

A set of actions that make the mindset into a reality. You get an actionable roadmap that gives you concrete, sustainable ways to cultivate motivation and collaboration. When you encounter a problem, reach into the Teamwork toolbox and see what might work.



## Time

Time, space, and patience for the journey. Nothing truly great happens overnight, so you need to set aside the time to do this work together. Remind each other that talking about work does 'count' as work; producing isn't everything.



# MINDSET

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The Teamwork Kit starts with a core belief that creative, resilient teams are made, not born. This means committing to the practices, tools and time to can help you transform from a group into something greater.

It's important for a facilitator to encourage and support healthy behaviours that emerge, and reinforce the norms. But in a thriving team, everyone takes part of this responsibility.

How this looks in your team will vary, but the formula is built around habits of listening, self-knowledge, and feedback.



# THE MINDSET IN ACTION

## Reflect as a habit

Build habits around self-learning and reflection until they become second nature. Use Feedback and Popup sessions to learn about yourselves and Alignments to get clarity.

## Take equal turns speaking

Encourage sharing, but keep it balanced within the team. Some people are natural talkers, and others aren't. Ensuring each person gets equal time helps the whole group. It builds bonds and raises collective intelligence.

## Use active listening

Pay attention, understand, clarify, and respond. Use mirroring, open body language, and affirmations. Engaging with others' perspectives means real dialogue, not just waiting for our turn to speak.

## Lead by example

Share personal perspectives on work, even failures and losses. Model vulnerability to make it safe for others. Encourage members to take risks, and demonstrate it yourself.

## Seek self-knowledge

Give and receive feedback, individually and together. The more you know about how your behaviour affects one another, the more resilient you become.

## Own your words

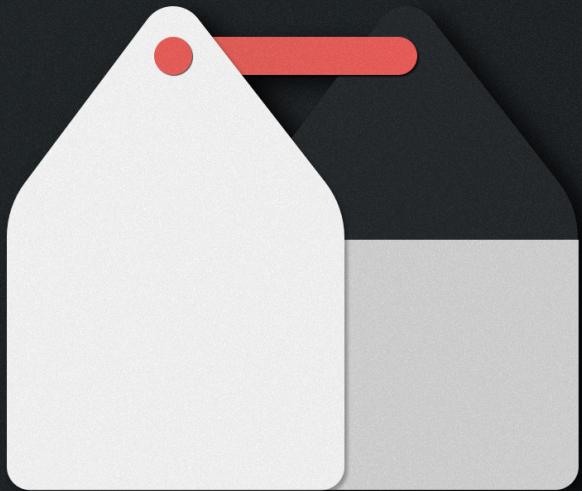
Speak from your own perspective, especially when giving feedback or an opinion. "I need" or "I feel" statements nurture empathy, and help create good boundaries and open communication.

## Make room for conversation

Make space for relaxed conversation, even within activities. It's hard to create safe bonds under stress, so make space for informal chats, and time-box activities so there's breathing room.

## Learn how teams behave

Teams develop in stages, and what's normal isn't necessarily smooth. Conflict and disagreement can be signs of maturity. Remind yourself that conflict is not failure.



# TOOLKIT

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The Toolkit is the backbone of the formula, and will help you draw out the information about your team, from your team, helping create the conditions for strong bonds and high performance.

The kit guides you through 5 types of activities, both time-based and need-based, each designed to enable continuous reflection, shared accountability, and a safe, trusting environment.

You should try to do each activity at least once, even in short projects. Over time, you'll find some tasks are more valuable to you than others, and you might even start adopting elements of the toolkit in other aspects of your work.

# TOOLKIT ACTIVITIES

## Foundation

The team sets up expectations, goals, roles and norms

## Alignment

A short workshop where the team checks in about progress and processes

## Conclusion

Reflect, discuss and package team insights, and celebrate your progress

## Feedback

Sessions to build self-knowledge and trust in the team

## Popup

Project feedback sessions with invited external people

# TIME-BASED ACTIVITIES

In every project, you need to align from an organisational, team, and individual perspective. This process helps you learn and reflect continuously from start to end.

There are three Teamwork Kit activities devoted to getting aligned, staying that way, and finishing strong. If you're working in a large group, you might want to consider scheduling extra time, to ensure people can speak without feeling rushed.

## Activities:

**Foundation, Alignment, Conclusion**

# NEEDS-BASED ACTIVITIES

Constructive feedback and encouragement are proven to improve team efficiency and well being. It's vital to get these during a project, in ways you can act on.

The Teamwork Kit includes two types of feedback activities that should be scheduled in advance, but can be done whenever the team feels the need. One for regular feedback between team members, the other for experts outside the team.

## Activities:

**Alignment, Feedback, Popup**



# TIME

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Groups progress at different rates, from early reliance on direction from a leader to conflict that resolves into structure, and then to maturity and bonding.

There are personalities, dynamics, and power differentials that affect that growth, and need discussion and time. In addition to the hours to do the activities in the toolkit, you need some flexibility to give these growing relationships breathing room.

Patience and support are as important as any other element in the formula.



# TEAM NEEDS TIME TO:

## Do the activities

Teams and facilitators need time to schedule the activities into the days, weeks, and months. Foundation and Conclusion require between two hours and half a day each, depending on the size of the team. You can build the ongoing activities into your standard project meetings, but book some extra time for them if you can.

## Build relationships

The pace of development will vary from group to group. The Foundation sets you off on the right path, but it can take anywhere from weeks to months just to get through the conflict stage. It's worth being patient and accepting that development isn't always linear.

## Cultivate the mindset

Habits don't form overnight. It's easier to build new habits with a supportive group, but it still takes effort and dedication on an individual level. Team members need some time and breathing space to find their way to a mindset that's reflected in what they do. And facilitators need their own time to think, reflect, and document.

# WHEN (AND HOW) SHOULD YOU USE THE TOOLKIT?

You can include the activities as part of standard meetings, do them separately, or some of both.

The Foundation workshop can replace a regular project kickoff meeting, or you can do a standalone session if you have the time. Alignments will be useful on their own or in place of some of your sprint meetings (if you work in sprints). You can schedule time for Feedback at the end of any meeting or workshop--just resist the temptation to skip it for the sake of time.

Whatever configuration you use, what's important is that the elements of the formula become part of your way of working.

# CAN YOUR TEAM USE THE TEAMWORK KIT?



## **When Teamwork meets reality**

The formula can work anywhere, but the depth of benefit depends what kind of setting you're in. If your organisation has room for autonomy and open dialogue, you'll see results sooner than if you're in a more closed culture.

The Teamwork Kit can be used with teams who've never met before, or can improve the 'how' of work with people who've worked together for years. It can lift any culture that makes the space for it, but it's most effective in open organisations.

Living up to our values is an ongoing challenge, even when everyone believes in them. The list below will probably sound more like the sort of place you'd like to work, rather than where you actually work. Maybe it's what your company even looks like on paper, but in reality, it's common for people to see values-alignment as extra work and feel they don't have the time.

Another thing to remember about 'values' is how they can be used to gloss over real issues, whether they're conflicts or experiences of injustice, so where people feel disconnected from values, it can come from past experience.

The process can help teams and individuals interpret values and company culture in a meaningful way.

## **The Teamwork Kit works best in an organisation that has all or some of these traits:**

Fosters an open, inclusive culture that makes room for mistakes and failure

Has a positive and growth-minded approach to team and performance

Rewards dedicated employees, from the bottom up and the top down

Has, or can create some space for reflection and growth

Works to create and maintain clarity in roles and responsibilities

The effectiveness of the process has little to do with the severity of the problems, and almost everything to do with how willing you and the people around you are to acknowledge them and do something about them.

Even if your company looks amazing on paper, you'll probably recognise the organisational issues below. Perhaps you can't change your entire organisational culture, but you can collaboratively work on these things within an individual team. For people who feel less safe connecting to company culture overall, it can be especially helpful to work on these things, so the team becomes a safe haven for them.

If you need to track your own progress, especially in a challenging organisation, you can turn to Chapter 5, *Are We There Yet?*, which contains questions for reflection and discussion that can help you get a sense of where you are as a team.



## IT'S DESIGNED TO HELP WITH THESE COMMON ISSUES

Unclear role and job descriptions, with tasks often assigned to the wrong people

A legacy of micromanagement or undermanagement

Vagueness around visions and disconnection between employees and leadership

Open to change but not sure how to go about it, or worried about investing in the 'wrong' approaches internally

Lots of new teams forming regularly, with new members frequently parachuted in mid-project

Insufficient knowledge transfer across teams and organisations

Small teams working with some autonomy, but who feel 'stuck' in small conflicts, stresses and frustrations

# Making Teamwork work in your organisation

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You can use this kit to help your team navigate some common organisational issues, and with the right support, you can even influence your culture from the ground up of it. When people on your team move on to new projects, they bring the experience and can influence their new work group. When you deliver creative, innovative work without the last-minute meltdowns (okay, less catastrophic last-minute meltdowns) senior people might take an interest in how you did it.

That said, it's tough for even the most resilient people to work in companies with extreme top-down dysfunction, regular rounds of layoffs, or widespread bullying and discrimination. These are common, they aren't your fault, and you can't fix a culture alone.

If there are a lot of difficult issues, the process will require more from you. In the end, you may not feel you've scaled new heights, or that you've been able to influence the most difficult personalities, but you'll have developed new skills to help resist internalising unhealthy behaviours. Maybe you've created a safer space for a team that was frustrated, and helped them feel closer to their potential. That alone is a victory. Depending on your starting point, if the team is focused on having a better day together, every day, you'll see progress, even if it's not as much as you hoped.

The Teamwork Kit is a commitment, and it works in part because the development isn't perfectly linear. It's designed to be a relationship-building process, which means it works best if you follow the whole process, and then keep at it.

Bringing change to any organisation can be tough. New ideas can ruffle feathers, and progress can be slow and frustrating. The following section contains some things you can do to take small steps toward getting the process up and running.

# Try it with your team:

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## Get a buddy!

Being a champion is tough when you're on your own. There's definitely someone around you who sees things as you do, so find that someone, show them The Teamwork Kit and make a plan to advocate together.



## Try a taster together

Test out some of the activities in a pair or small group. Feedback sessions and elements of the Foundation can give you a sense of the experience. If you're surrounded by people who doubt the value of praise feedback, try something like [Hyper Island's Stinky Fish exercise](#), which you'll find in the Foundation workshop section.



## Do a self-evaluation

Find out where your strengths and weaknesses are as a team or work group by starting a structured conversation about how the people around you see themselves and your organisation. Use the discussion questions in Chapter 5 to guide you, and then show them how The Teamwork Kit can help them improve in the areas that concern them most.

# Take it to the next level

Once you've got some initial traction, you can start building momentum. It's important to talk about it, so include updates in newsletters, share photos or filled-out templates on your intranet, company Slack or in a monthly meeting. But it's more important to show people what it can do for them. Here are a couple of ways to do that.

## Create a group of support facilitators

Once you've built interest, help the interested would-be facilitators make themselves available to other teams, so you can lower the bar for adoption across your organisation. You'll be able to call on one another for help, whether it's with an issue in the team, or when you need a fellow The Teamwork Kit advocate with management or clients.

## Do a short version outside your team

Find people in your organisation who are interested in team development and group dynamics, and give them a taste of Teamwork with a Feedback session, or walk them through a Foundation. It's important to do all the steps when you first start a project, but a condensed Foundation might help you get buy-in for the longer process.

# Need help getting started or staying the course?

## Bring in an outside facilitator

The Teamwork Kit process needs to be driven internally, but a trained external facilitator can help you figure out how to make it work for you. If you can't get someone from outside the company, find someone internally who has had some training, and ask for their time, or at least their advice.

## Contact us for advice and support

We can send our facilitators to you to help establish The Teamwork Kit, or run a custom session. We know it's not feasible for everyone, but we really are here to help. You can also email questions to our team. Around 10-12 experienced facilitators monitor this email address and will respond to you:

[teamwork@daresay.co](mailto:teamwork@daresay.co)

## Convince your company

Need a solid argument for getting the time and space for The Teamwork Kit? The more internal support you get for The Teamwork Kit, the more you can influence your whole organisation. Chapter 4 of this handbook is designed to help you make a good case.

# Ready to start? Here are 3 things you'll need

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## A team

It works with any kind of customer-centric team that has a problem-solving function, but it's designed to be adaptable for any group that works together.

Activity time estimates are for teams of 4-6 people, but it works with teams of 2, or even 20. If your team is bigger than 6, you'll need significantly more time, for the Foundation session especially.

## A facilitator

We recommend someone neutral, from outside the team, or even outside your company. They'll be able to be more neutral, and it can be hard for someone to facilitate and participate at the same time.

If that's not possible, anyone on the team can do it, as long as they get time and space to manage the responsibility.

## Some time

You need time for the activities, and patience and support in the team and from management. You should book standalone sessions when you can, so there's time to get used to the tools and methods, but you can also tack on extra time to standard meetings.

If you need to convince anyone to give you this time, turn to Chapter 4 for help.

# Trust the process

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Many of us want to do better work and build emotional intelligence as we do it, and that's what The Teamwork Kit is designed to help you do. You'll know each other better, and you'll know yourself better. As a result, you'll start to do things like approach conflicts as a shared problem, not a chance to "win".

It won't work exactly the same with every team, but if you decide to do it, we recommend you trust the process and follow the entire program, even if you find you have to tweak or adapt sessions for your team or your project constraints. By 'trust the process', we mean the steps, tools, and mindsets. Because in reality, we know not everyone can adhere to time specifications.

Groups take time to develop, so you'll need to persist through conflicts, stalled progress, setbacks, and crunch times. That's the important part—to use the tools and keep up your mindset.

There will always be occasions when having a meeting about the team dynamic seems less important than whatever is urgent on your to-do list, but that's when we most need these discussions. The foundation you'll have laid early on will make these times easier, and you'll come out stronger.

# BE A TEAMWORK FACILITATOR

Just like being a creative, resilient team, facilitation is a skill you learn over time with a set of tools and a committed mindset. If you're facilitating this process, your job is to help the group maintain focus, clarity and direction, and ensure that everyone is comfortable participating. If you're on a team but not the facilitator, this section is for you, too—the team is everyone's responsibility and you don't need to wait for permission to take care of each other.

Not only is every group different, but people also behave differently depending on who's around them. But that's good news, since that means people can adapt to rules, norms, and responsibilities. Over time, you'll observe how each group works, and start to learn ways to take this mixture of personalities, needs and quirks and nurture a dynamic that brings out the best in everyone.

It's a challenging job, so lead by example and be kind to yourself as you grow and learn.

Don't try to solve everything. Stay focused on the goal, which is to guide and enable the team to feel they fit the action-oriented definition we've outlined. It's not about being the best at everything all the time. It's about building trust and delivering strong work together.



**A creative, resilient team is a group of people who, when given a task they haven't seen before, have the habits and norms to build reflection loops, cultivate safety, and solve a problem effectively, reliably.**

This chapter is a step-by step guide to facilitating the activities. If you want to learn more about being a great facilitator generally, there are links to further reading at the end of it.

# Before your first teamwork kit workshop

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## Choose the right space

There should be enough seating, but not so much empty space that it feels cavernous. And it needs to be comfortable and easy for anyone with mobility issues or other access needs. If you're not in your own premises, find out about snacks, food, water and bathrooms.

## Send a message to participants

Do a friendly introduction and summarise the purpose of the session. You'll find some sample emails in the Activities section of this handbook. Make sure instructions and directions are clear. Include anything they should prepare in advance.

## Plan for the unplanned

Take an hour to check in with yourself. How will you handle hard questions, time overruns, or issues that come up that need to be set aside? No need to catastrophize, but do think about what could go wrong, and how to keep the team on track without shutting down an important issue.

## Gather your research

Find the company or brand values and be ready to present them to the team. It can help them start right away connecting with the main organisational values. It's also possible that people in the room may not be familiar with them.

## If the team is new to you

Who will be there? What are their roles and what's the 'seniority spread' in the group? Even in a non-hierarchical organisation there are power differentials that matter. Are there any participants with added needs you should know about? Are you able to address them without help?

## If they're new to each other

Let them take time to warm up and introduce themselves, both in a structured and unstructured way. Plan some warm-ups and energisers to get them started. Keep an eye on people who seem a little less comfortable in groups.

# During a workshop

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## Read the room and check in

Respond to the mood. Start with a check-in of your own, and invite the team to do the same. If there are issues that need to be left outside the room during the session, you can mention them, too.

## Stay on track with latecomers

If someone is late, let them get settled and keep the workshop moving. When there's time for it, do a light recap or ask someone on the team to catch them up.

## Be mindful of timeboxing

Use a timer, and try to stay on track with exercises. Give one- or two-minute warnings, and give them a little time to finish when the time is up.

## Do exercises solo

The exercises in The Teamwork Kit are designed for solo thinking and working before sharing with the team. This tends to yield better ideas than tasks that are done in groups. When time is tight, revert to discussion as a group for the activities where you think there's already alignment.

## Stay neutral about content

Your job is to get insights from the team and aid their process. If something inappropriate happens, remind them of norms and rules, otherwise help them focus on their goal. But see below about some caveats in groups with invisible or subtle power differentials.

## Help them stay energised

If the energy is flagging, or if it just seems helpful, do an energiser. A 5-minute icebreaker can help a tired or anxious team get back on track quickly. If people are uncomfortable being too personal, stick with reflective or practical tasks. Try [hej.today, a check-in generator](#), if you need ideas.

# After a workshop



## Document everything

Document core tasks and highlight any unresolved issues. Photograph sticky notes and team templates, and store the hard copies if you need to. Display the posters somewhere the team can access them. After a Foundation this could take 1-3 hours, but it will be shorter with other activities.

## Book a new workshop quickly

Make sure everyone knows when and what the next session will be, while they're still in 'Teamwork Kit mode'. If they need extra sessions to address parked issues, book those, too.

## Follow up with team members

Team members might have new responsibilities individually or collectively. It's important to make sure everyone knows what they are. Check in between sessions to see how those are going.

## Assess your own process

Give yourself 15-30 minutes to note your own experience. What went well? What could you improve on? What should you do more of?

# Between a workshop



## Seek out people for Pop-ups

Even if you don't have one in the immediate future, let people know that you'll be asking for feedback. It's also a great way to spread awareness of the process in your company. Approach people who mirror some of the end users, and also some who could bring a truly outside perspective.

## Onboard new team members

If you have a new person joining, there will be onboarding within the group, but before that happens, make sure they're aware of The Teamwork Kit activities. Book a one-on-one session to introduce them to the concept and the materials that have been done to date. Add extra time to the next Alignment to make sure the team gets time to welcome the new member.

## Keep up the culture

Send encouragement, along with reminders about the next session and about your availability. Use the language of strong teamwork regularly so it becomes part of the group's communication patterns. If something has happened that might affect the group (e.g., sudden departure of a teammate, a big change in the organisation), some or all members might benefit from an extra check-in.



## SAFETY IS A TRICKY CONCEPT IN AN UNEQUAL WORLD

One last thing, while you can design and build environments that encourage positive, healthy growth, and most people want this, remember you can't control other people's behaviour.

Everyone has bad days and downer moods, but there are some people who are challenging no matter what the context. A safe environment can make them even more discourteous and unprofessional because they learn the language of it without adopting the values. In other words, some people equate their own safety with a feeling of advantage over others.

In this process, we encourage the use of nonviolent communication (NVC). NVC works well when everyone is on board with the outcome of a connected, trusting, bonded team, but not all people are trying to move toward more connection and compassion.

A common (and perfectly valid) criticism of NVC is that because it's rooted in a belief that humans are fundamentally compassionate, becoming too focused on the structure of statements can gloss over non-verbal aggression or abuses of power. This can often leave people with experiences of marginalization feeling like their marginalization is just an emotion rather than a systemic injustice, and this can have a silencing effect. You don't want that.

Even NVC's most ardent advocates, including its founder, Marshall Rosenberg, accept that it can't work in every situation.

## What can we do?

If everyone upholds group rules it can mitigate the damage to some degree, at least during sessions, where you can point to depersonalised rules about timekeeping or structure. Staying neutral is extra-valuable here, but being neutral doesn't mean ignoring an issue that's affecting people. It's also important to have good boundaries, and even a please-leave-the-room line that's clear to everyone.

It's good to be aware of this issue and to try to address misuse when you suspect it, perhaps by probing a little deeper into a person's expectations. What does a safe environment look like for them? What are the obstacles as they see them? These questions can help to surface whether they feel unsafe or if they have a perspective that isn't safe for others.

**But ultimately, these people need to be the organisation's problem, not yours.**

At the other extreme, keep an eye on people for whom vulnerability might be uncomfortable, whether it's because it's culturally inappropriate for them to talk about emotions, or because it's led to a bad outcome for them in the past. An environment that asks for vulnerability will require sensitivity on several fronts, and you won't always be able to tell who needs it most, so just assume it's everyone.

In addition, watch for people who really need added support, especially during the conflict stage of group development. Take them for coffee if that seems appropriate (it may not be, especially if you're an external facilitator). Let them be heard, but without asking for details they might not be comfortable sharing. If you feel singling them out could be a problem, try doing some warm-ups or check-ins that are fun but don't involve too much personal revelation, to help people connect without feeling exposed.

**Be patient and, again, keep healthy boundaries.**

The Teamwork Kit can't solve your jerk problem, but it can help you distinguish the merely insecure from the definitely damaging people. And it can help people who've experienced bad group settings learn to feel good about collaboration again. But facilitation isn't magic, and you should be sure to take care of yourself, too.

# FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

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## Advice on facilitation

Frank, Brian. "Becoming a Better Facilitator," *Smashing Magazine*, January 6, 2017. Accessed: August 15, 2018. <https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2017/01/becoming-better-facilitator/>

Wheelan, Susan. *Creating Effective Teams.*, 3rd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2009).

Wilkinson, Michael. *The Secrets of Facilitation.*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012).

"Guide: understanding team effectiveness," Google Re:Work. Accessed: August 15, 2018. <https://rework.withgoogle.com/guides/understanding-team-effectiveness/steps/introduction/>

## Research on facilitation and psychological safety at work:

Edmonson, Amy, "Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44, no 2 (June 1999): 350-383. [http://web.mit.edu/curhan/www/docs/Articles/15341\\_Readings/Group\\_Performance/Edmondson%20Psychological%20safety.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/curhan/www/docs/Articles/15341_Readings/Group_Performance/Edmondson%20Psychological%20safety.pdf)

Brown, Donna and Brendan McCormack, "Exploring psychological safety as a component of facilitation within the Promoting Action on Research Implementation in Health Services framework." *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 25, issue 19-20 (October 2016): 2921-2932. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27528002>

# MAKING THE CASE FOR THE TEAMWORK KIT

We've based a lot of the thinking in The Teamwork Kit on research that ranges from mid-20th century organizational theory to more current projects. This includes work on group dynamics in [Susan Wheelan's integrated model of group development](#). Insights on team performance from [Google Re:Work](#) validate some of the same beliefs we have around building trust together. It's a practical formula, not a magic one, but we know we're on the right track.

We've designed it around our own experience, with a consistent focus on creating environments that are safe for people to speak up, be heard, and do their best work. Even if you can see the value, we know that it might not be enough. It can be tricky to change the organisation you're in.

This chapter is designed to help you make the case for the time, space, and patience needed to make a real impact.

## We've been there, too!

You're probably reading this handbook because you know the value of building safety into your team and you want to take some practical steps. But it takes time and shared commitment before you can reach the rewards of The Teamwork Kit. And that means you might need to convince others before you can start.

Maybe you need to persuade a manager concerned about time budgeting, or who is reluctant to add what looks like more meetings to an already busy schedule.

Or there could be people around you who doubt the value of anything perceived as “touchy-feely.” Perhaps you’ve been using the toolkit and you want to convince your organisation to adopt it more widely.

Or maybe you need to show skeptical teammates that yes, there are good reasons to talk about our feelings at work.

The next pages are written directly for the people you need to convince.

You can print or send the overview on the next few pages, or the full chapter, with links to further reading.

# How the Teamwork Kit helps organisations

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High-performing teams aren’t special because they have the perfect mix of superstar employees. What they have in common is that they have a high level of shared trust and safety, often because they spend time talking about the ‘how’ of work. And their work is more robust and often more innovative. The Teamwork Kit helps teams reach this state by taking steps and making commitment to their own group development.

The goal of this approach is a creative, resilient team. This is defined as a group of people who, when given a task they haven’t seen before, have the habits and norms to build reflection loops, cultivate safety, and solve a problem effectively, reliably.

**Teams that have a high level of trust and safety perform better because they:**

Have higher collective intelligence than teams where social sensitivity isn’t an explicit goal

Address mistakes and ask questions earlier in a process than teams that don’t specifically cultivate psychological safety

Cultivate a ‘we’ culture that leads to more active knowledge transfer

Produce more innovative work because they dedicate space to reflection loops and risk-taking

More easily meet milestones and delivery dates because they spend time aligning and share a sense of mutual accountability

Are more likely to persist through challenges and complete projects successfully than teams where roles and responsibilities are less clear

# What it takes to build a team like this

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The Teamwork Toolkit is free, but it requires commitment and support.

## Time and space

The team needs a place to meet and about half a day to get started, then a 120-minute meeting at the end. We can plan the other activities as part of regular project meetings, but we'll need dedicated time within those.

## Support

It works best with a facilitator from outside the team. This can be someone from our organisation, or an external professional. The team will also need help convincing people to drop in on the 30-60-minute Popup feedback sessions along the way.

## Patience and encouragement

The benefits come from commitment over time, so the team needs your help navigating internal structures, and managing expectations, inside the group and out. Showing others what we've achieved by working in this way will help us do so with greater confidence.

# What our organisation gets

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## Increases team performance

[Teams that receive strengths feedback are 12.5% more effective](#). They have higher collective intelligence, which [leads to better, more innovative deliverables](#).

## Benefits the overall brand

Managers can help employees [connect their work to the company's wider purpose](#). Satisfied employees [increase company returns](#).

## Contributes to employee retention

[Reshaping collaboration](#) helps employees learn more and feel less stressed. It can even [support diversity and inclusion work by bringing its goals to the level of employee conversations](#).

# We know your evangelism is never done

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Maybe you're halfway to convincing those around you that The Teamwork Kit is a valuable approach, but they're still looking for more. Even if everyone is on board, it's important to remember that evangelism for new methods is never done.

It can help to keep making connections between the foundational elements of the formula with increased team performance, and the way these things benefit the overall brand and contribute to employee retention.



The next section is full of concise arguments and links to research. It's designed to help you with ongoing advocacy for the time, space and resources to see the processes through.

## Increases team performance

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The Teamwork Kit is based around cultivating trust and safety in teams by ensuring that each member is accountable, responsible and transparent, but also valued, heard, and supported.

It's designed to facilitate regular project progress tracking, which makes managerial reporting easier. There is even a way to measure its success.

Because there's so much focus on alignment and updates, it's easier to acknowledge mistakes and ask for help early, as well as onboard and offboard new and departing team members mid-project. This helps with knowledge transfer and keeps communication open.

Clear roles and responsibilities and nonviolent communication encourage a culture of positive feedback and belonging, as well as ensuring shared and individual accountability.

- Studies show that teams that receive strengths feedback [are 12.5% more effective](#).
- [Google's multi-year study](#) demonstrated that performance is linked, not to individual members on a team, but how the group behaves together.
- Transparent, fair conversation can contribute to [more equal environments](#).
- Higher collective intelligence in more equal teams is shown to bring better, [more innovative deliverables](#).
- When it's [safe to raise issues](#) early and be honest about mistakes [video], it leads to broad organisational improvements.
- Teams with [high levels of psychological safety](#) learn more, take more risks, and are more innovative.

# Benefits the overall brand

With The Teamwork Kit, project deliverables are of higher quality, and teams perform better, but over time, approaches that focus on the ‘how’ of work can have broader benefits for companies.

The focus on shared values and norms is an opportunity for employees to feel they contribute to the overall company goals.

Cultures where teams and managers cultivate safety are more able to take risks and innovate.

Team members who feel valued and are praised for their strengths do better work, building brand reputation and leading to growth and revenue gains.

- Managers can help employees [connect their work to the company's wider purpose](#).
- Satisfied employees [increase company returns](#).
- Team members who experience more stress are more likely to need [sick leave and health services](#).
- Workplaces that have [a positive culture are also more productive overall](#).
- Strengths feedback [correlates with revenue gains](#), even where it’s delivered to managers.

# Improves employee retention

Recruitment is expensive, but retention doesn’t have to be. You don’t need to pay for everyone’s dry cleaning to keep your great people from leaving or underperforming.

People want to improve their skills, connect with others, and see the value of their work to an organisation. A dedicated, defined approach to teamwork helps with all of these.

Employees are more likely to stay in a company that gives them room to develop, grow, and make mistakes they can learn from.

Attention to equal speaking time and creating safety for all can make it easier to address the needs of underrepresented groups.

- Reshaping how collaboration works can [help employees learn more and feel less stressed](#).
- Psychological safety [increases knowledge transfer](#), promoting a learning environment.
- Employees who feel connected and supported are less likely to quit.
- Supports inclusion and diversity work by [bringing empathy and acknowledgement](#) of differences to the level of employee conversations.
- Creating space for emotional check-ins can counter some of [the conditions that lead to employee burnout](#).
- Employee retention has more to do with recognition, learning and communication than ‘perks’.

# ARE WE THERE YET?

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## Evaluating your teamwork journey

Effective teams share a few key traits that help them go beyond efficiency. It's not something you can measure easily, but you're doing fine if you're moving toward these three things:

- Trust and shared safety**
- Clear understanding and shared responsibility**
- Collective and individual value**

Not only is every group different, but people also behave differently depending on who's around them. But that's good news, since that means people can adapt to rules, norms, and responsibilities. Over time, you'll observe how each group works, and start to learn ways to take this mixture of personalities, needs and quirks and nurture a dynamic that brings out the best in everyone.

In this chapter we've prepared some discussion points to use with your team, and a simple way to take a measurement over the medium and long term. You can try them before you start The Teamwork Kit, and/or once you've been using it for a few weeks or months. Do them during an Alignment, or as part of a separate meeting, to help you learn about your progress with the Teamwork mindset.

# Trust and safety

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Few people enter a group feeling comfortable to share and be themselves. Safety needs to be built consciously and continuously, and not everyone will progress at the same rate. And as we discussed in Chapter 3, structural inequality and power differentials can make safety a tricky concept.

Here are some questions you can discuss with your team to gauge where you are in the process and do even better. Feel free to rephrase them or add some examples if it's hard for people to start talking, but try not to make the questions leading. It's also a good idea to watch for any indications of misalignment between language and values.

Do team members seek and give constructive feedback? How often do they give praise?

Does it feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other? How comfortable are they saying "I don't know" or owning a mistake?

Do members listen to one another and show sensitivity to feelings and needs? How reflective are they?

How equal is the conversational turn-taking between members?

Are they practicing active listening? How familiar are they with nonviolent communication principles?

Can any team members give an example of a time when they felt worried they might be shunned or mocked?

# Clear understanding and shared responsibility

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When you have a clear understanding of your role and you know what to expect from others, it's easier to set realistic goals and feel positive about meeting them.

Use these questions to help you identify positive and negative indicators about your progress. Get the team to supply examples, and help them rephrase anything that sounds too much like blame.

How comfortably do team members depend on one another to keep promises?

Does work feel like it is being delivered on time? When that's not the case, how much clarity is there about why not, and when it will be done?

Are members of the team clear about their own roles and responsibilities? Can anyone give an example of something that remains unclear?

How do team members feel about the goals for the team? How much ownership do they feel they have?

Is there enough visibility and transparency within the team, about progress, tasks, and needs? Can anyone give an example of a time when an issue or worry came as too much of a surprise?

# Collective and individual value

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Work is most fulfilling when the people doing it can find a sense of purpose within it. Individuals want to feel connected to their teams, and teams want to see how their work matters to the organisation.

Here are some questions to help you see where those connections are, and where they could be stronger. If it surfaces that someone is upset about feeling undervalued, give them some space and try not to police their expression of it. Seed the response with positive language so they feel heard.

- Can the team describe how the project/initiative is connected to a larger purpose?
- Do team members feel the work is personally important to them? How much or how little?
- Are individual members seeing their work and responsibilities reflected in the project more broadly? Can anyone give an example of when this didn't happen, but should have?
- Are achievements and milestones being recognised regularly? Are there any that have been missed?
- Does the work feel matched to skills, abilities and interest for each individual in the group?

# How will I know?

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Collaboration is hard to measure, and it can seem strange to stick a quantitative measurement on how people feel together. But most organisations want to know that you're spending your time and energy in a way that seems wise, and they might want something a little bit more than just "we take good care of each other" as a success metric.

Whether you're working with The Teamwork Kit in one project or across space and time, you can ask a couple of simple questions to measure your progress and show your organisation that a defined approach to the 'how' of work has a real impact.

We keep track of who is using it and how often. We ask team members:

**Does your project use The Teamwork Kit? Which parts have you used?**

And then we ask:

**On a scale of 1-4, how aligned are your expectations about what you're supposed to deliver with what is being communicated within and to the project team?**

It's not a perfect measurement, more of an indicator. We see low or widely varied scores as something to address, not to see as a sign of failure. If communication isn't working and expectations aren't clear, we know to start asking questions about what else isn't working. If the scores vary a lot within a team, we also know we have a problem, and it's probably that some team members feel excluded and other team members aren't aware of it.

Our hope is that you will see improvement over time. That eventually, near the beginning of a project, teams will have score of 2 or 3, and be a solid row of 3s and 4s by mid-project. Of course, we *really* hope it's 4s all around, from start to finish, but it's important to acknowledge that reality is messy.

# Conclusion: What's next?

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No matter how well you know every individual on your team, each configuration of people forms a completely different team. A quiet person might come alive in one group, or, change a few members, and that confident go-getter can't get out of the room fast enough.

When you need to talk about stress levels, worries, or even triumphs, that's when you're least likely to do it. Over time, skipping or de-prioritising those conversations makes us decreasingly good collaborators. It can make some people emotionally numb; others may become overwhelmed.

There are many reasons a team can fall apart, but all truly effective teams have one thing in common: they care about each member being heard and valued. That's every reason to have a method, not just for your project tasks, but for the team itself. That's where we hope this formula comes in.

Now that you've read this handbook, you're ready to start the activities in The Teamwork Kit.

# TOOLKIT ACTIVITIES GUIDE



## You're ready to get started!

The Teamwork Kit is divided into folders by activity type. In each of the folders, you'll find the templates, Facilitator's guide, and sample presentations you can use with or adapt for your team.

This section gives an overview of each of the five core activities in the toolkit. We've reproduced each summary in the relevant folder, so, once you're ready to go, every part of the activity kit can stand on its own.

# FOUNDATION

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The team starts to connect the project with a way of working. They create expectations, goals, and norms.

## PURPOSE

**For the organisation:** Outline why we're doing this project and how it came to be; context helps people connect better with project goals. It's also a chance to get early indication about unclear elements or concerns.

**For the team:** We make sure everyone is clear about roles, responsibilities, goals, deliverables, and team needs. It's a chance to get clarity early, making the project easier to navigate in the longer term.

**For each individual:** A first step in creating the trust and safety people need to do their best work. It's a chance to get and give clarity, validation, and support.

## WHEN

2 - 3 hours

After team project briefing, whether or not work has started. Larger teams or those new to the process will need a wider time margin.

## WHAT YOU NEED

- Everyone on the team
- Someone who knows how the project came to be
- Printed activity templates, introduction slides
- The action points template
- A projector, some stickytape, sticky notes, and pens

# Checklist

## Before a workshop

- Book a space and schedule time with the team. Don't forget to ask about access needs.
- Invite the participants (adapt our template email, if you wish).
- If purpose and deliverables can be added to templates in advance, do this (it will save time).
- Find out who can outline the project origin. If it's someone outside the team, invite them to the session, or get them to share the story with you.
- Print the templates, gather materials.
- On the day, be a little early. Put up posters and do an equipment check.

## During a workshop

- Keep an eye on the time. Time-boxing the exercises helps keep the energy levels up.
- Check the facilitator tips in the activity presentations. They're there to help keep you on track.
- Let the team know where the documentation will live.
- Have fun. If you're following the process, you're doing fine.

## After a workshop

- Make sure you save this material and make it easily accessible to the team. Put the template posters up in a common space somewhere.
- Gather up any questions you 'parked' during the session and put them up beside the template posters.
- Take photos! Posters get taken down, and you'll want a digital backup because you need these posters for the Alignment sessions.
- Book upcoming sessions, if you didn't do this during the workshop.
- Fill out the action points template and make sure you get it to the team as soon as possible so they don't lose momentum.

# ALIGNMENT

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Alignment workshops are a chance to check in about the team's progress and processes, and adjust or re-commit to the plan.

## PURPOSE

**For the organisation:** It's a chance to check in about the processes, plans, and collaboration. Getting on track and staying there means better deliverables and less time on knotty situations along the way.

**For the team:** This is a time to adjust or discuss any roles, responsibilities and needs. Getting clarity early and often will make everything easier to navigate, and help the team resolve conflicts more easily.

**For each individual:** Alignments are an opportunity for each participant to work on building a culture of safety, by giving and receiving the clarity, validation, and mutual support most people need to do their best work.

## WHEN

90 mins - 3 hours every 4-6 weeks

Intermittently throughout project, with added sessions if project scope changes or the team needs it.

## WHAT YOU NEED

- The team members
- Posters from the Foundation session
- A projector (if you're using the slides), sticky notes, and pens

# Checklist

## Before an alignment

- Book a space and schedule time with the team. Don't forget to ask about access needs.
- Print the templates, gather sticky notes, pens, and any other relevant materials.
- On the day, be a little early. Put up posters and do an equipment check.

## After an alignment

- Take photos of updated poster and any other things created during the session.
- Document any actions and responsibilities, and email them to the team.
- Book upcoming sessions, if you didn't do this during the workshop.

## During an alignment

- Try setting a theme for the check-in part of the workshop.
- Take it easy on the first alignment. If there aren't any project-related changes, just focus on building safety in the group. Feeling good together has value in its own right.
- Use an energizer if the participants seem to be flagging or still on edge.

# CONCLUSION

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At the end of a project, or at a major milestone, a Conclusion is a chance to reflect, package insights and celebrate progress.

## PURPOSE

**For the organisation:** Teams get a chance to reflect, and to collect, and document their insights. This can inform future directions and help improve ways of working across the organisation.

**For the team:** This is a time for clarity, reflection and celebration. The team revisits the victories and bumps, as well as the bonding moments, both good and bad.

**For each individual:** It's at the end of a process or project when we can take in feedback and reflect with ourselves and each other honestly. Each Conclusion is a chance for team members to process their own growth and help others see theirs.

## WHEN

1.5 - 2 hours + celebration time

After project delivery, or, for longer projects, after a phase or major milestone

## WHAT YOU NEED

- The team members
- Printed template posters, a presentation (if needed)
- Projector (if using slides), sticky notes and pens
- Old magazines or newspapers
- Celebratory refreshments

# Checklist

## Before a Conclusion

- Book a space and schedule time with the team.
- Create a celebratory vibe, at whatever level is appropriate for the space, office, or team.
- Prepare templates and bring old magazines, catalogues, or newspapers.
- Bring coffee, drinks and/or snacks. Ask about alcohol policies (or considerations around drinking within the team) beforehand, and check about allergies and preferences, to ensure everyone is included in the celebration.
- If time is short, the facilitator can prepare the timeline in advance, and team members can annotate it.

## During a Conclusion

- Exercise plenty of creative freedom. Use images cut-outs from magazines, and have fun crafting something that will help people open up about their own emotional curves along the project journey.
- Make sure everyone gets enough time to talk, especially people who haven't spoken up much.
- Keep the vibe positive and let them feel celebratory about failures they learned from as much as victories they achieved.

## After a Conclusion

- Share everything that was learned with the team, add a photo of the journey, and save this material for a follow-up.
- Review project conclusions, preferably together, to map out patterns for future improvements.
- Rejoice! You did great.

# FEEDBACK

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Feedback sessions are regular opportunities to strengthen relationships and build self-knowledge.

## PURPOSE

**For the organisation:** Feedback sessions help build healthy, high performing teams faster, and can raise collective intelligence, making deliverables stronger and contributing to a positive company culture.

**For the team:** Feedback sessions give team members a chance to build stronger bonds and cultivate the trust and safety they need to persist through conflicts, support one another, and improve communication.

**For each individual:** Developing closer professional relationships means a stronger connection to the team and the organisation, in a way that is individually meaningful.

## WHEN

30-60 minute session every 2-3 weeks

Intermittently throughout project, or when the team needs a boost. Short versions can be incorporated into standard meetings

## WHAT YOU NEED

- The team members
- Feedback template posters
- Sticky notes and pens

# Checklist

## Before a Feedback

- Book a time and introduce the team to the Teamwork Kit Feedback approach (i.e., it's not just about saying what's on your mind).
- Choose Feedback templates.
- For the first session, be prepared with some examples to help people understand the positive ways to deliver feedback.

## After a Feedback

- Ask the team to reflect on the session and invite suggestions for improvements, efficiency, or simply talk about how to make it more fun.
- Check in privately with anyone who seemed upset or didn't react as expected to any issues or discussions that came up.

## During a Feedback

- Decide whether to do a one-on-one Feedback session, or open. Public feedback requires high shared emotional safety, so it may not be appropriate for the first session.
- Talk about the importance of "I" messages, and active listening. Participants should resist the impulse to be "blunt" and focus on specific contexts that both giver and receiver remember.
- Use some low music if doing one-on-one sessions, so conversations feel a little more private.
- If the team is large, each participant should pick three people to give feedback to. Ensure that everyone both gives and receives some, and that everyone gets some praise

# POPUP

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At a Popup session, the team invites people from outside the project to give feedback and insights.

## PURPOSE

**For the organisation:** These sessions increase knowledge-sharing and break down barriers across organisations. They're a good way to help build a supportive feedback culture without a top-down approach.

**For the team:** A Popup is a chance to get feedback from relevant people outside the team who can bring the bigger picture back into focus, and provide useful mid-project insights.

**For each individual:** It's a chance to take in feedback as part of a group, and help build self-knowledge collectively and individually.

## WHEN

30-60-minute session every 2-3 weeks

Intermittently during the project, or when the team feels they need an extra set of eyes

## WHAT YOU NEED

- The team members
- Sticky notes and pens
- Invited guests, and any visual or tangible material that presents your project to them

# Checklist

## Before a Pop-up

- Seek out some people who would provide useful insights, either for the project type, or about a specific challenge the team is facing.
- Send an email explaining what you're looking for and invite them to the Pop-up.
- Get there early and make sure the room is comfortable and welcoming. Make sure you've checked about access needs.

## During a Pop-up

- Go over some basic feedback rules.
- Give guests sticky notes and pens, so they can write down thoughts and questions as you talk.
- Briefly introduce the project, the team, your approach, and your goals.
- Outline any specific challenges the team is having, or, if you want an 'open' feedback session, come up with some guiding questions just to get them started.

## After a Pop-up

- Directly afterward, have everyone stick around to reflect on the feedback the guests have given. Process independently for a few minutes, then go around and share your responses.
- Decide together on next steps, and how to handle any actions that need to be taken from the session.
- Document the feedback to look back at it later in the project.

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### The Teamwork Kit was produced by Daresay

Daresay was established in 2008. We're a full-service design and technology agency and we work with daring, curious organisations to build digital experiences that make them successful, customer-centric, and ready for the challenges of a digital-first world. We have a team of about 90 people, from 19 different countries, and our offices are in Stockholm and Umeå, Sweden. We're ready to take on your biggest digital and service design challenge.

This collection of methods was the answer to our own problems: we had unclear roles, fuzzy expectations, and not enough clarity around deliverables. A team of designers began reshaping our internal way of working in early 2016. With the help of consultants, content professionals, visual designers, client feedback, and a lot of trial and error, we've packaged our ways of working for anyone to use—that's what you're holding right now.

### We hope it will help you and your team be better together!

The Teamwork Toolkit is released with a Creative Commons Attribution Sharealike Licence, except for [the Stinky Fish exercise](#), which we recommend in the Foundation activity. Stinky Fish was developed by Hyper Island ([toolbox.hyperisland.com](http://toolbox.hyperisland.com)), and any specific use of it should be credited solely to them.





With love from

**DARESAY**